

# REDUCING TRANSPORT NEED – FLEXIBLE WORKING

## SUSTAINABLE CORPORATE MOBILITY USE CASES

### DESCRIPTION

Even though some flexible working concepts started a couple of years ago, the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically increased the number of employees working from home globally. While reflecting on how to build a more sustainable future, many employers consider integrating flexible working as a permanent solution. They are encouraging their employees to ask themselves if they need to travel to work – and if so, how they can do it most effectively and sustainably. Flexible working is one of the ways to facilitate this behavior.

Considering employees' personal and business needs, flexible working allows for arrangements combining working from home, the office and other facilities. Flexible working arrangements can help employees manage their work-life balance leading to lower levels of stress and absenteeism and giving them scheduling freedom on how best they could fulfil the obligations of their position. However, recent studies done during the pandemic also show that working from home can have negative effects on some employees. Some employees associate it with higher stress due to inadequate working environments in small flats and/or the need to care for children in parallel, increased health risks like depression and lower personal life/work balance. Flexible work needs to be correctly supported and the companies need to provide adequate conditions to avoid these risks. Working from home can also be part of the behaviors encouraged through gamification and sustainable mobility rewards.

Flexible working arrangements include flexitime (employees have the freedom to choose when they start and end work, provided they deliver results), flexplace (employees work from home or some other non-office location) and job-sharing (two or more employees voluntarily share the responsibilities and duties of one full-time job).

Flexible working and working from home can reduce the need for commuting, but there is a need to be vigilant in how these are implemented. In some cases, flexible work will increase transport emissions for individuals who choose to live further away from work in zones where they will be car-dependent or have a significantly longer commute by public transport for the remaining few days in office. This can also be the case for parents who drive their children to school near work and end up driving more since they go home after leaving their children at school instead of going to the office.

**Objectives pursued:** Reduced need for transport; improved employee flexibility; reduced employee health risks; compliance with regulations.

**Context:** Flexible working arrangements are more prevalent in cities in Asia, Europe and the US, and linked to the type of occupation – some types of work cannot be shifted in time and space. Businesses can adopt this arrangement in geographical locations with learnings from leading organizations actively practicing the same.

### Main benefits

Flexible working can reduce the number of cars on the road, leading to less traffic congestion, less wear and tear on the road – a contributor to plastic runoff in water bodies – and reduced air pollution and vehicular emissions. With employees working from any location of their choosing, flexible working has the potential to boost their morale, productivity and satisfaction, leading to improved employee retention and attraction. For a business, utilities and operations costs can be reduced as fewer employees are present in the office space.

**Cost elements:** Can be of low cost and help reduce the need for office or parking space, as well as company car costs. The costs for IT infrastructure and for security measures associated with working from home can be high.

### Possible challenges and how they can be addressed

Although flexible working conditions can have significant benefits, there are also high risks associated with them. Employers need to ensure that arrangements are sustainable for employees and verify if they reduce transport needs. Employees will also need assistance to effectively work within flexible arrangements

such as IT support, internet access and other tools. Not all jobs can be done effectively from home and some employees will have preferences concerning their workspace. Companies must find a good balance both for the individual and for teams and departments management.

### Metrics for impact evaluation

Employee satisfaction is a major impact of flexible working and can be evaluated through surveys or questionnaires. An analysis of operational cost savings and carbon footprints is another method for assessing impact.

### Our members who have adopted flexible working

